



ESAA

English Schools' Athletic Association

Dear Colleagues,

We can now provide the following updates relating to the competition age groups and competition formats for 2026 and beyond. There has been some confusion around the ESAA statement this week.

Track and Field Championships 2026

After the Special Council Meeting in October 2025, it was decided that ESAA will adopt the new UKA Age groups starting from September 1st, 2026. Following further consultation with England Athletics and recommendations from an established working party, adjustments have been made to the format of the 2026 Track and Field Championships: the U16 (Year 9 and Year 10), U18 (Year 11 and Year 12), and Year 13 age groups will be introduced for sprint hurdles and long hurdles events, along with their technical specifications. All other track and field events will continue to use the Junior (Year 8 and 9), Intermediate (Year 10 and 11), and Senior Age group (Year 12 and 13) categories using the new technical specifications for the older of the age groups.

Entry standards for the current Junior, Intermediate, and Senior events have been updated for 2026 and will be available on the ESAA Website, and new recommended Entry Standards for the U16, U18, and Year 13 sprint and long hurdles events will be published as soon as possible.

Combined Events Championships 2026

The Combined Events championships in 2026 will retain the same age groups, Junior (Y8/9), Inter (Y10/11) and Senior (Y12/13) and events but mirroring the 2026 ESAA Track and Field Championships hurdles specifications (but with the inclusion of Y8 in the Junior age group), thereby necessitating the use of two separate scoring tables in the hurdles event in each age group. Note '1st year' athletes will be using heavier weight throwing implements than the ones they use in club competitions in the following age groups - JB, IB,SB, JG and SG

Considering recent decisions regarding our 2026 championships, we acknowledge that ESAA will receive a reduced grant from England Athletics. To maintain the quality of athletic experiences for County Schools Associations and their athletes, we are proactively pursuing sponsorship opportunities.

Some decisions will need further consideration regarding the delivery of your County Schools' Championships in 2026 and the selection process for County Teams for the Regional Combined Events and Track and Field Championships, given that athletes involved in club athletics will have moved age groups and technical specifications as of 1st April 2026.

The SIAB Track and Field Championships will include Intermediate (Years 10/11) in 2026. We will share details on athlete selection for the SIAB sprint and long hurdles events well before the Championships.

ESAA Working groups 2026

Both the General Committee and County Schools' Associations showed strong interest in joining the Working Groups, which will recommend competition formats following ESAA's adoption of UKA even age groups for Track and Field and Combined Events from the 1st September 2026. The Cross-Country group will review Championship age groups as required by the England Athletics conditional grant offer made in November 2025.

Separate groups have been formed for Track and Field, Cross-Country, Combined Events, and Cup competitions, each with 7-10 members representing Event Coordinators, Officers, England Athletics, General Committee, and County Schools' Associations. Not everyone who expressed interest could be included.

The groups will prepare an initial document detailing possible competition formats and the associated challenges that might arise for our championships and competitions after September 1, 2026. These documents will be shared with the General Committee for discussion and feedback at the upcoming meeting on **Saturday, April 18, 2026**, and a final document outlining the ESAA proposals will be shared with County Schools Associations by the end of June 2026.

Each competition working group is chaired by an appointed lead, who will serve as the primary contact for matters relating to their respective championship format. If you wish to contribute feedback or raise viewpoints for discussion, please contact the relevant chairperson using the contact details provided below or alternatively contact me and I will forward to the appropriate group.

- **Track and Field Championships** – Sue Garvey (suegarvey72@gmail.com)
- **Cross-Country Championships** – Paul Allison (allison.pa@nottinghamhigh.co.uk)
- **Combined Events Championships** – Iain Presnell (ijkl.presnell@btopenworld.com)
- **ESAA Cup Competitions** – Paul Ponton (paul.ponton@btinternet.com)

While it's improbable that we will create proposals reflecting every member's perspective, our primary focus should be finding a way forward that strengthens the association and ensures continued competition opportunities for our young people.

ESAA Honorary Secretary
12th February 2026

